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THE 'DRESS REHEARSAL': THE FOREIGN OFFICE AND THE CONTROL OF ITALY, 1943–1944

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'Italy will be a dress rehearsal...' (Post-Hostilities Planning Sub-Committee; 9 August 1943)

There is a widely held idea in the literature on the politico-diplomatic history of the Second World War that the occupation of Italy and the organization of the Italian armistice regime constituted a crucial step in the development of inter-allied relations, so much so that it represented a *model* for the future – not just a presage but a paradigm which was to be applied on a European scale.[1] This idea is difficult to evaluate, if one is to avoid a priori 'axioms'[2] or the logical fallacies of the 'post hoc ergo propter hoc' kind. None the less, while it is hard to prove that the Italian case was really such a paradigm, it can be shown that in 1943 this was precisely *the way it was considered*, not just sporadically by 'some' particularly far-sighted Westerners[3] but on a permanent basis by the whole British foreign office.

The military events that marked the end of 1942 and the beginning of 1943 constituted the great turning-point in the war, politically, strategically and psychologically: 'As the Allies won the strategic initiative, the problems of cooperation among them took on new forms'.[4] In his speech of 1 January 1943, Roosevelt epitomized the significance of this new phase in inter-allied relations by proclaiming the allies' 'supreme' duty to bring the solidarity forged on the battlefield without delay to the building of the future peace.[5]

As the Foreign Office defined it at the beginning of 1943, the great task for the new year was to create an atmosphere of political trust among the allies capable of lasting beyond the cessation of hostilities. This is the framework within which the 'Italian problem' has to be situated. In the eyes of the F.O. the question of the control of the occupied European territories would provide the opportunity for tripartite political co-operation to take root. Italy, the first metropolitan enemy territory to be occupied, was thus to constitute a trial for a much broader design, extending far beyond the Italian peninsula.

When they disembarked on the beaches of Sicily during the night of 9–10 July 1943, the allied forces began their 're-entry into Europe' precipitating at the same

[1] See respectively W. H. McNeill, *America, Britain and Russia. Their cooperation and conflict, 1941–1946* (London, 1953), p. 310, and G. Kolko, *The politics of war. The World and U.S. foreign policy, 1943–1945* (New York, 1968), p. 128.

[2] See D. Yergin, *Shattered peace* (Boston, 1978), chs. I and II.

[3] S. Lynd, 'How the cold war began', *Commentary*, XXX, 5 (Nov. 1960), 384.

[4] McNeill, *America, Britain and Russia*, p. 220.

[5] *The public papers and addresses of F. D. Roosevelt*, ed. by S. I. Rosenman (New York, 1950), XII, 3.

time Italy's withdrawal from the war. It was at Casablanca, at the beginning of the year, that the British and American leaders had taken the decision to launch an amphibious attack against Sicily (operation HUSKY) after a strategic debate too well known to require further elucidation here. Less is known, however, about what was said during the four months of political and administrative discussions between London, Washington and Allied Forces Headquarters in Algiers following the Casablanca decision. It was from Algiers that Eisenhower opened these discussions on 8 February, asking the American joint chiefs of staff and the president for directives concerning 'important matters of policy affecting operation HUSKY'.[6] In the eyes of the allied commander-in-chief for the Mediterranean theatre the key importance of these questions lay in the fact that HUSKY, as the first allied operation implying the occupation of non-colonial enemy territory, was bound to 'establish precedents far-reaching in scope...'. According to Eisenhower, 'policies now adopted will affect future operations throughout the war'. The foreign office fully agreed: 'arrangements there [in Sicily] adopted would inevitably constitute a precedent for the civil administration of Italy and Germany'.[7]

What was at stake in this long 'Sicilian' debate[8] was far more than what Macmillan considered the 'rather childish' issue of the *senior partnership* the British claimed, and the Americans so vigorously opposed, in the military government of the island.[9] In reality the discussion hinged on the whole question of the direction of 'civil affairs' in the territories occupied by the two allies following joint military operations. According to the Americans, anxious to banish any likelihood of a 'parallel chain of command',[10] political questions in these territories should have been the *exclusive* responsibility of the commander-in-chief for the theatre of operations, thus falling under the sole jurisdiction of the combined chiefs of staff, from which all instructions to the C.-in-C. were to originate. The Foreign Office, on the other hand, aimed to ensure for His Majesty's government the possibility of *directly* influencing the conduct of civil affairs on the spot, without following the 'roundabout route via the C.C.S.' – which in its view suffered the double disadvantage of being a military body and of being based in Washington.[11]

In practice, at the end of the discussions, while the British succeeded in preserving the possibility of discreetly short-circuiting the role of the C.C.S. in civil affairs through Harold Macmillan, their resident minister at A.F.H.Q., the Americans were able to ensure the triumph of the fundamental principle of the supreme authority of the C.-in-C. and the C.C.S. over the whole range of activities of the allied military government of Huskyland (A.M.G.O.T.).

As the F.O. had foreseen, on this crucial point the Sicilian experience was to constitute the true precedent for the 'Italian precedent'. As soon as the Anglo-American discussions concerning Sicily had been brought to a conclusion, they began all over again on the issue of the armistice regime for Italy as a whole. Here

[6] Macmillan to Churchill no. 9861, 9 Feb. 1943, Public Record Office, F.O. 371, R 6050/6050/22 (37298).

[7] F.O. to Washington, no. 3596, 29 May 1943, R 6151/6050/22 (37300).

[8] For a summary of this discussion see Bruno Arcidiacono, *L'Italie dans les relations interalliées: la répétition générale (1943–1944)* (Genéva, 1981), pp. 36–124, and A. Varsori, 'Senior or equal partner?', *Rivista di studi politici internazionali*, XLV, 2 (Apr.–June 1978).

[9] H. Macmillan, *The blast of war, 1939–1945* (London, 1967), p. 454.

[10] Memorandum, Haskell for A.S.W., C.A.D. files, 7 Apr. 1943, *Civil affairs: soldiers become governors*, ed. H. L. Coles and A. K. Weinberg (Washington, 1964), p. 168.

[11] F.O. to Macmillan no. 857, 1 June 1943, R 6103/6050/22 (37299).

the Americans, having originally strongly opposed them, eventually accepted the main lines of London's proposals – the conclusion of a *bilateral* armistice with the Italians, the *indirect* administration of the peninsula through an indigenous government and the creation to this end of an *inter-allied control commission*. However they then succeeded in placing this latter body under the authority of Eisenhower and the exclusive jurisdiction of the C.C.S.[12]

The 'American doctrine of the supremacy of the Theatre Commander'[13] had thus prevailed throughout these purely Anglo-American discussions, first as regards Sicily and then continental Italy. It now remains to examine the overall consequences of this, considering the question of the control of the occupied European territories, and occupied Italian territory in particular, within the larger framework of relations among the *three* major allies.

As was suggested earlier, at the turning-point in the conflict this question began to assume critical importance in the eyes of the Foreign Office, which saw it as a means of laying the foundations for tripartite political co-operation capable of outliving the military victory of the coalition. The reconciliation of military requirements and political considerations was precisely the task facing the F.O., and in particular the newly born Economic and Reconstruction department, which, under the guidance of Gladwyn Jebb, was becoming 'a machine for thinking out an entire long-term foreign policy'.[14]

In mid-January 1943 this department hosted an exploratory meeting intended to 'clarify [the] ideas' of participants 'on the subject of the administration of liberated territory as soon as hostilities cease'. Right from the beginning the key concept which was to guide all future work was clearly formulated: in each region liberated, regardless of the 'liberator', the three allies were to exercise joint responsibility. 'I suggested', wrote Jebb in the minutes of the meeting, 'that there would be advantage in attempting to get from the Soviet and American governments the acceptance of the principle that major decisions concerned with the occupation of territory belonging to the common enemies of this country, the U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. [...] should be taken by the British, American and Soviet governments jointly'. The 'advantage' of this kind of postulate is clear: the Soviets would commit themselves to 'consult us in regard to any enemy [...] territory which may be captured by the Russian forces'. In exchange, 'they would secure a British and American undertaking to consult them in respect of territory in Western Europe and North Africa recovered from the enemy'.[15]

On this basis, during the coming months the Foreign Office was to build up a general plan, the aim of which was already easily perceptible: a satisfactory transition from wartime to peacetime co-operation to be achieved via the adoption, in the occupied territories, of a tripartite approach which, while granting Moscow a *droit de regard* in the West, would avoid the risk of a Russian monopoly in Eastern Europe. As Eden wrote to ambassador Clark Kerr in February, the goal was to ensure that no 'one of the Great Powers should run a policy of its own in opposition to, or behind the back of, the others': only on this condition could one hope to see 'some real European order' emerging from the defeat of Nazi Germany.[16]

[12] See a more detailed analysis of these discussions in *La répétition*, pp. 171–316.

[13] This expression is used by P. J. Dixon in his memorandum 'Control commission and arrangements in Italy', 29 Sep. 1943, R 9356/6447/22 (37309).

[14] *The memoirs of Lord Gladwyn* (London, 1972), p. 109.

[15] U 321/67/70 (35338).

[16] Eden to Clark Kerr no. 56, 4 Feb. 1943, ibid.

All that remained to be done was to devise a machinery to put these hopes and principles into operation. As Jebb noted at the beginning of March, 'whatever doubt we might have as to the likelihood of its achievement, we ought at this stage to consider the best possible solution'.[17] The best possible solution, which for Jebb implied 'some uniform system applying to the whole of Europe'[18] materialized, after several weeks of work in the Economic and Reconstruction department and some preliminary contacts with the Americans,[19] in the form of a detailed memorandum, which Eden submitted to the war cabinet on 25 May. Bearing a rather vague title ('Armistices and Related Problems'), this document actually outlined a system of control over the occupied territories entirely inspired by the principle of joint responsibility on the part of the three major allies.[20] The administration of the various armistices was to be the task of a series of inter-allied commissions, chaired in rotation by the United States, the U.S.S.R. and the United Kingdom. At the same time a 'U.N. Commission for Europe', representing the supreme allied authority on the continent, was to co-ordinate and direct the activities of the various armistice commissions and of the commanders of the occupying forces – and in its turn was to be directed by the three great powers, through a 'steering committee' on which each was to enjoy a right of veto.

Despite what has been written by some historians,[21] the rationale underlying this plan seems extremely clear. Had it been rigorously applied in Europe, it would have allowed the three allies to participate on an equal footing in the formulation of each armistice and in the politico-military control of each occupied territory, regardless of the nationality of the troops which had imposed the armistice and occupied the territory in question. In substance, the memorandum of the Foreign Office was an attempt to minimize the political importance of military presence in an area during the crucial period following the cessation of hostilities. This is hardly surprising for a country which relied principally on its navy and air force, and which was still reluctant to embark on a massive invasion of the continent. In this sense one could argue that the F.O. plan was to some extent the diplomatic corollary of the peripheral strategy sustained by the London military authorities, which would have left the Red Army the task of destroying the Reich on the ground. The British approach was therefore the exact opposite of the concept put forward by Stalin to Djilas in April 1945: 'Whoever occupies a territory also imposes on it his own social system. Everyone imposes his own system as far as his army can reach'.[22]

This was precisely the risk felt in London in the Spring of 1943, and expressed

[17] 'Secret record of meeting held in Jebb's room', 3 Mar. 1943, U 1178/25/70 (35315).

[18] Ibid.

[19] On 24 and 25 March, during Eden's visit to the United States: Jebb accompanied the secretary of state and profited from the occasion to discuss the matter with Dunn, Atherton and N. Davis.

[20] Memorandum by the secretary of state for foreign affairs, 25 May 1943, U 2556/25/70 (35318). Also see Sir L. Woodward, *British foreign policy in the second world war* (London, 1976), v, 46–9, and G. Warner, 'Italy and the powers 1943–1949', *The Rebirth of Italy*, ed. J. S. Woolf (London, 1972) pp. 30ff.

[21] See for example B. Kuklick: 'On the basis of the available evidence it is difficult to explain this high-level British statement...' What creates particular doubts in the author's mind is that 'it immediately invited full Russian participation in the Italian surrender, and [...]London soon attempted to dissociate itself from it' (see 'The genesis of the E.A.C.', *Journal of Contemporary History*, IV, 4 (1969), 190). In the following pages I will attempt to explain this apparent incongruity.

[22] M. Djilas, *Conversations with Stalin* (New York, 1962), p. 114.

so aptly by John Wheeler-Bennett when he wrote that, however unpredictable the Russians might be traditionally ('*Ex Sarmatia semper aliquid novi*'), at the end of the hostilities 'the motto of Stalin may well be that of Mr. Jorrocks: "Where I dines, I sleeps"'.[23] In his peroration to the F.O. memorandum Eden echoed this view declaring to his cabinet colleagues that the plan they had in front of them was the only way to avoid 'the creation of a situation in which Russia would organise an independent system of her own in Eastern Europe'.[24] The aim of the F.O. was to set up a machinery capable of 'harmonizing' the policies of the three allies. For Eden 'the most likely way to effect such harmony is by the constitution of some body such as the U.N. Commission for Europe'. Short of this, 'no settlement of any kind is possible. In that case – the memorandum prophesies – we should have very shortly, after the conclusion of this war, to set about preparing for the next'.[25]

Three weeks after having examined this paper the British cabinet authorized Eden to submit the substance of its proposals to the Soviets and the Americans. In the first half of July ambassadors Maisky and Winant thus received from the secretary of state a short aide-mémoire with the long title: 'Suggested principles which would govern the conclusion of hostilities with the European members of the Axis'. This document illustrated in ten points the views of the Foreign Office concerning armistices and the administration of occupied territories.[26] In London, however, it was already clear that the implementation of this decalogue would encounter serious obstacles.

Right from the start the F.O.'s plan had had a broad ranging aim: the establishment of a 'uniform system applying to the whole of Europe'. Half way through 1943 however it was clear that Italy (whose capitulation had become the main objective of the Mediterranean campaign since the TRIDENT conference in May) was to be a test bench for the 'Suggested principles'. It is precisely the difficulties inherent in applying the F.O.'s general principles to the specific Italian case that will now be examined.

Jebb perceived the nature of these difficulties in June, when he expressed his concern about the 'tendency' of the C.C.S. to claim exclusive reponsibility for the zones occupied by the armies of the two Western allies: a pretension which in his view was not only 'absurd' but 'quite impossible, supposing that we postulate a real co-operation on the part of the Russians in the execution of the armistices...'.[27]

The tendency which Jebb feared would indeed have had extremely deleterious effects on tripartite co-operation, but was not at all absurd. Rather the contrary it was the logical consequence of a situation which the Foreign Office had failed to take into account in its plan, and which was pointed out by Professor C. K. Webster at the end of June. 'Generally', he wrote, 'the plan does not appear to take into consideration the fact that we shall probably still be fighting Germany during the first stages of the work of the Armistice Commission [for Italy]'. It would thus be impossible for this body to be placed from the start under the supreme authority of the 'U.N. Commission for Europe, [which] will probably not be in existence'.[28] The implications and significance of this were clear: so long as the peninsula was a base for military operations, it would be difficult for the armistice commission to be anything other than a subordinate body to the C.-in-C. But how could a Soviet

[23] 'On the making of peace', memorandum dated Mar. 1943. U 2652/25/70 (35319).
[24] *Armistices and related problems.* [25] Ibid.
[26] See *Foreign Relations of the United States* [hereafter *F.R.U.S.*], 1943, I, 708–10.
[27] See U 3009/25/70 (35320). [28] Note dated 26 June 1943, U 2709/324/70 (35385).

representative, in direct contact with Moscow, effectively participate in (and chair, in rotation with his Western colleagues) an inter-allied control commission which would have to be subordinated to the C.-in-C., whose instructions came directly from the purely Anglo-American C.C.S. in Washington?

To this problem there seemed to be no solution. Given his awareness of this fact Jebb's number two went so far as to deplore the possibility that the Italian enemy might capitulate too soon: 'The precipitation of the Italian issue is unfortunate from the point of view of machinery...'. If this were to happen, he asked, 'is there any alternative to putting the Armistice Commission under Eisenhower...?'[29] There was none. At a meeting on 30 June, in Jebb's office, the officials concerned drew the consequences. If hostilities with Italy ended in the near future and operations against Germany continued, the "inter-allied" armistice commission was bound, in practice, to be an Anglo-American commission. Everyone saw the drawback of this solution: 'it might become a precedent for excluding Anglo-American participation on any Armistice Commission set up in a predominantly Russian theatre'.[30] But it was equally clear that the Americans, attached as they were to the 'doctrine of the supremacy of the Theatre Commander', would never be willing to tolerate the presence in Italy *before the end of hostilities* of an *executive* body, autonomous and multipartite – that is to say a decision-making centre outside the control of the C.-in-C. and the C.C.S.

This then was the heart of the problem. During the early months of 1943 the Foreign Office had conceived of a system designed to be put into practice in Europe *following the end of hostilities* and to lay the ground for joint allied co-operation *during the post-armistice period*, thereby ensuring that in the East the U.S.S.R. would not 'go their own way without regard for [Anglo-American] wishes'.[31] The plan, in other words, was based on the implicit assumption that the expressions 'armistice' and 'cessation of hostilities' amounted to the same thing. It hardly took any account of the possibility that the capitulation of one 'European member of the Axis' might come a long time before the end of hostilities on the continent, or that this might not coincide with the end of the fighting in the very country which had signed the armistice. This however was exactly what was going to happen. In September 1943 Italy withdrew from the war but the war came to Italy. After the surrender, for almost twenty months the peninsula was to be not just a base for operations but the theatre for a military campaign against the main enemy. The result of this gap in time between the surrender *of* Italy and the cessation of hostilities *on* Italian territory was that for the whole duration of the fighting the armistice regime was primarily determined not by the political considerations of those who were thinking about the post-war period, but rather by the military requirements of those responsible for conducting the war.

The most important of these, in the eyes of Washington, was, as we have seen, the indivisibility of Eisenhower's authority in his theatre. It was this preoccupation, together with a fear of an Italian version of the Darlan affair, that induced the American joint chiefs of staff to propose at the beginning of July a procedure to formalize Italy's defeat involving a unilateral capitulation followed by the elimination of any indigenous central authority and the extension of the *direct* military government planned for Huskyland to the whole of the peninsula, which

[29] Note by J. G. Ward, 29 June 1943, ibid.

[30] Minutes of a meeting between Jebb, Dixon, Webster, Ward, Fitzmaurice, etc., 30 June 1943, U 2997/324/70 (35386).

[31] *Armistices and related problems.*

would thus be subjected to a super-A.M.G.O.T., entirely subordinated to the C.-in-C. and the C.C.S.[32]

For the foreign office there were many disadvantages to this *modus operandi*; the most important of these was certainly that it implied the complete exclusion of the Soviets. In Jebb's opinion there would be a high price to pay for this: 'We shall probably find ourselves completely in the cold when it comes to winding up hostilities with Finland, Hungary and Rumania'.[33]. On July 23 the F.O. further developed this argument, inviting ambassador Halifax to draw the Americans' attention to the 'Russian aspect' in the conclusion of hostilities with Italy: 'If by some chance Germany were to collapse as a result of Russian action in the field, that government in the light of our previous behaviour over Italy might well feel justified in deciding, without consulting even their major allies, exactly what to put in and what not to put in the German terms...'.[34]

This sudden concern with Germany is easily explained. At this time the Russians had practically won the great battle of Kursk and had just announced the creation of a 'National Committee for a Free Germany' – an initiative which the F.O. saw as the 'Soviet answer to the establishment of A.M.G.O.T.' in Sicily.[35] According to the Northern department the Russians considered Europe 'as being one and indivisible', and were as interested in France and Italy as Britain was in Poland and the Balkans.[36] And given that the British were already in Italy, whereas the Soviets had yet to arrive in the Balkans, it was up to the London government to make the first move.[37]

In reality the key to the problem was not in the hands of the British. When the Americans finally accepted the F.O.'s idea of administering the peninsula indirectly and signing, to this end, a bilateral armistice with the Italians, they expurged the draft instrument proposed by London of any reference to an allied commission charged with supervising the execution of the terms of surrender. In the American view, this function could only belong, as Marshall wrote to Roosevelt, to 'General Eisenhower under the authority of the American and British Governments through the C.C.S.'.[38]

For the British this was an unacceptable and dangerous concept. Italy was going to be a 'dress rehearsal' for other occupations of enemy territory in the future.[39] Accordingly the F.O. had attempted to adapt its original ideas to the Italian situation in order to ensure at least a partial role for the Soviets in the armistice regime. Undoubtedly the 'ad hoc arrangement' imagined by the Southern depart-

[32] 'Surrender terms for Italy...', memorandum C.C.S. 258/1, 1 July 1943, R 6347/6050/22 (37305). Also see J.S.M. to London no. 36, 5 July 1943, ibid.

[33] Note of the 6 July 1943, U 3009/25/70 (35320).

[34] F.O. to Halifax no. 4855, 23 July 1943, U 3225/324/70 (35386).

[35] Note by G. M. Wilson, 25 July 1943, N 4514/499/38 (36991). The next day Eden suggested this interpretation to Winant: *F.R.U.S.*, 1943, II, 335.

[36] Note by Wilson quoted above.

[37] As Clark Kerr put it, 'if [...] we invite them to come to Italy, we should be on good ground to demand a counter invitation'. Kerr to the F.O. no. 684, 28 July 1943, R 6938/242/22 (37263 A). Also see Kerr to C.F.A. Warner, letter dated 10 Aug. 1943, N 5158/66/38 (36956).

[38] Memorandum dated 3 Aug. 1943, *F.R.U.S.*, *The conferences at Washington and Quebec, 1943*, p. 538.

[39] Post-hostilities planning sub-committee, memorandum PHP(43)2, 9 Aug. 1943, P.R.O., CAB 87, 83.

ment at the beginning of July provided for the creation of a rigorously bipartite control commission, duly subordinated to the C.-in-C. At the same time, however, it entrusted the conduct of *general* political relations with the Italian government to a group of 'political agents' (amongst which would be a Soviet representative) independent of the commission.[40]

A compromise between these two antithetical positions was found by Macmillan, who suggested to his government, on August 10, that an Anglo-American commission chaired by Eisenhower, should be given the double-barrelled task of supervising the execution of the armistice terms *and* of conducting italo-allied relations.[41]

In practice Macmillan's formula became the corner-stone of the Anglo-American discussions.[42] It is thus necessary to emphasize that while this was probably the only solution acceptable in Washington and Algiers, at the same time it prevented all *effective* participation by the Soviets in the Italian armistice regime. It is only 'in some kind of consultative but not executive capacity' that the resident minister intended to involve them in the control system, and this would be achieved through an 'advisory committee' attached to Eisenhower, where the Russians would be represented alongside the Anglo-Americans, the Greeks, the Yugoslavs and the French. It was pretty much this solution (less than satisfactory as far as Moscow was concerned) which Eden would have presented to Molotov ten weeks later, at the conference of the foreign ministers of the three great powers in October 1943.[43]

On all sides the Moscow conference was hailed as an 'outstanding success', an 'important contribution to the common cause'.[44] As far as Italian affairs were concerned, however, it was a triumph, if anything, of ambiguity. Could it indeed have been anything else once, in the fourth session,[45] Molotov had exhumed – and officially accepted – the British 'Suggested principles', which Eden could not disavow but which, in practice, had become totally inapplicable to the Italian situation? Nearly four months after having proposed its plan for a tripartite administration of the European armistices the Foreign Office thus obtained Soviet agreement, but at a time when this agreement was liable to give a profound misunderstanding concerning the very nature of the system which would emerge from the conference.

In concrete terms, the latter gave birth to two inter-allied bodies: an 'Advisory Council for Italy' (A.C.I.), based on Macmillan's idea, was set up in Algiers and a 'European Advisory Commission' (E.A.C.) which the British expected to become,

[40] 'Administration of Italy after Husky', memorandum by Dixon dated 5 July 1943, R 6794/6445/22 (37307). [41] Memorandum ACA(43)7, 10 Aug. 1943, CAB 87, 83.

[42] It was on this basis that the control commission was finally set up, at the beginning of November 1943: see *La répétition*, pp. 279–316.

[43] In the meantime the F.O. had been clearly impressed by the 'increasing interest taken by the Soviet government in Italian affairs', and the cabinet had declared that 'the Russians will regard [Italy] as a test case which will determine their future attitude towards collaboration'. But American reluctance *vis-à-vis* any project which might lead to the creation of 'two independent sources of authority' on the peninsula blocked the F.O.'s attempt to offer the Soviets 'a satisfactory place on the Control Commission, something better than membership of the advisory Council on an equality with the Greek and Yugoslav governments...' See *La répétition*, pp. 413, 422–4.

[44] See respectively Kerr to the F.O. no. 1252, 5 Nov. 1943, and the *Pravda* editorial of 2 Nov. 1943, N 6575 and 6536/3666/38 (37031 and 37030).

[45] See the British and American minutes in N 6921/3666/38 (73031) and *F.R.U.S.*, 1943, I, 604–13, 705–8.

at some point in the future, the 'supreme U.N. authority' on the continent, as provided for in the F.O.'s general plan. Although this was *never* fully explained to the Soviets at Moscow,[46] neither of these bodies could immediately give the latter what they wanted and what the 'Suggested principles' had guaranteed them, namely full and effective participation in the conduct of Italian affairs.

On 1 November, while celebrating in its turn the success of the meeting which had just ended, the periodical *Voina i rabochii klass* insisted on the importance of the coming weeks: 'Everything now turns on realisation of decisions taken...' On leaving the conference both the Russians and the British might have believed they had succeeded in their aims. The way in which the Moscow decisions concerning the control of Italian territory could be put into practice was soon to dissolve any illusions on either side.

While the Foreign Office considered the constitution of the E.A.C. and its location in London as a great success,[47] for the Soviets the key element in the machinery set up at the conference was undoubtedly the A.C.I., which they saw as the body responsible for 'co-ordination and direction of the general policy connected with the work of control'.[48] They sent to Algiers Andrei Vyshinsky, a representative of the highest rank.[49] Even before he arrived, however, two concrete questions emerged which directly concerned the U.S.S.R.'s position in Italy. The first of these was that of the nature of relations between members of the A.C.I. and the Italian government. More precisely, could the former entertain *any* form of relations with the latter without passing via the control commission? In conformity with their respective lines up to this time, the F.O. was strongly in favour of granting the A.C.I. 'direct access' to the Italian authorities, and the Americans were firmly opposed.[50] In the end, it was to be the American position (backed by the British war office) which prevailed. As Murphy was to inform his colleagues on the A.C.I. in mid-December,[51] the only way in which they were to be allowed to contact the Italian government was through the bipartite commission chaired by Eisenhower.

The second problem was that of the composition of this commission. Was it to remain an exclusively Anglo-American body or was it to be opened to the Soviets? At the beginning of November the latter had nominated two officers to represent them on the commission. Was this unorthodox move to be accepted?[52] Once again the F.O. was of the opinion that, in view of the importance the Russian government clearly attached to this question, 'it would be impossible to resist their demand without risking a major row'. The Americans insisted on a much more rigid line: 'as no Russian troops are in Italy there is no justification for them to be represented on Control Commission...'[53] As soon as he arrived in Algiers, at the end of

[46] At times they were made to believe exactly the opposite: see for example the British minutes of the meeting of October 22.

[47] See *The Eden memoirs* (London, 1965), II, 414.

[48] *Pravda*, 2 Nov. 1943.

[49] At the beginning Vyshinsky's colleagues were Macmillan, Robert Murphy and René Massigli. The Greeks and Yugoslavs were admitted at a later stage.

[50] See R 10750 and 11011/6447/22 (37311 and 37312). Also *F.R.U.S.*, 1943, II, 434.

[51] During the 3rd session, 15 Dec. 1943, R 238/51/22 (43829).

[52] This appointment was the result of a deciphering error during the transmission to Moscow of the text of the armistice agreement between the United Nations and Italy: *La répétition*, p. 453.

[53] J.S.M. to London DON 114, 11 Dec. 1943, and letter from Sargent to Bovenschen, 2 Dec. 1943, R 13105 and 12497/6447/22 (37316 and 37314).

November, Vyshinsky strongly reiterated his government's demand,[54] but Washington's unwillingness to accept this intrusion of the Russians (and French) postponed any solution of the question until the second half of January 1944. It was only at this point that the Americans resigned themselves to accepting a Soviet presence on the control commission. This presence, however, was reduced to a purely consultative role, of more symbolic than real importance.

At the beginning of 1944 Vyshinsky had thus become aware that the armistice regime established in Italy had nothing to do with the parity-based system announced, in mid-1943, by the F.O.'s 'Suggested principles'. The Soviets had practically no role in the executive machinery of control; the consultative body in which they did have a full role had proved to be disappointing, 'slow and lacking in drive' and, worse still, lacking in 'adequate rights'.[55] Their reaction to this situation was to materialize after Vyshinsky's return to Moscow (in mid-February). It took the form of a spectacular diplomatic manoeuvre which, by short-circuiting the control commission, was to put at stake the very foundations of the armistice regime.

At the beginning of March 1944 the Anglo-Americans learnt with surprise, irritation and concern that the U.S.S.R. and Italy had decided to reestablish 'official relations' and to exchange direct representatives. For public opinion, the most 'sensational' aspect of the operation was Moscow's 'recognition of [Italy's] ex-fascist premier'.[56] Neither the F.O. nor Macmillan could mistake its 'deeper significance'.[57] Behind the U.S.S.R.'s political recognition of the king and Badoglio's government (which Churchill, too, had greeted with unconcealed satisfaction[58]) the resident minister was perfectly aware of the attack on the control system which the Western allies had established in the south of the peninsula following the Moscow conference.

As we have seen, this system was primarily an expression of the requirements put forward by Washington. The Americans' protests to the Moscow government were thus very firm, much more so than those of the F.O., which aimed not so much to reverse the fait accompli as to limit its consequences.[59] However vigorous, the Western reactions were not enough to make the Soviets go back on their move. It does seem legitimate to argue, on the other hand, that these protests may have prevented the Russians from continuing the policy launched in March and adopting the kind of active, independent line of conduct which would have represented the logical follow-up of this diplomatic action. Vyshinsky's successor had confidentially announced just this kind of strategy to Renato Prunas, general secretary to the Italian foreign ministry, when he assured him that the exchange of direct representatives would not remain 'an isolated act but would be followed by other Soviet proposals based on a policy of closer relations with Italy'.[60]

Informed of this, just as confidentially, by Prunas, the Anglo-Americans decided to take this opportunity to address a severe warning to the Russians (and the

[54] Naturally enough Massigli, the French delegate on the A.C.I., followed closely on his heels.

[55] This was Vyshinsky's verdict on his return to the U.S.S.R., as expressed to the British ambassador: Clark Kerr to the F.O. no. 691, 14 Mar. 1944, R 4019/51/22 (43830).

[56] V. Mastny, *Russia's road to the cold war* (New York, 1979), p. 143.

[57] Macmillan to the F.O. no. 408, 10 Mar. 1944, R 3880/51/22 (43830).

[58] See his minute M 255/4, 10 Mar. 1944, R 4328/51/22 (43830).

[59] Halifax to the F.O. no. 1374, 18 Mar. 1944, R 4332/51/22 (43830) and Hull's instructions to Harriman, 16 Mar. 1944, *F.R.U.S.*, 1944, III, 1057–9.

[60] Rumbold to the F.O. no. 450, 21 Mar. 1944, R 4484/51/22 (43830).

Italians): 'The Italian government is not in a position to enter into any engagement with any country without the consent of the Supreme Allied Commander which must be sought through the Control Commission'.[61] But on which article of the armistice agreement should this warning be based, asked chief commissioner Mason-Macfarlane? It should not be based on the armistice, Eden replied, but on the 'general right of a C.-in-C. of occupying forces on grounds of military security to control relations between the occupied territory and all other countries'.[62]

Barely a year had passed since the Foreign Office had sketched out its 'uniform European system' founding it on the postulate that the three great powers should exercise joint responsibilities in all occupied enemy territories. Now it was the opposite principle which was being formulated. When Eden referred to a 'general right' of the C.-in-C. prevailing over the stipulations of the armistice convention,[63] he was actually saying that the military occupier should have exclusive responsibility for the regions controlled by his troops. The British had thus totally reversed their position.

As far as the British were concerned, we have seen that the exclusion of the Soviet Union derived neither from a lack of foresight, nor yet from a deliberate, politically motivated design. The Foreign Office was not in the least blind to the 'exemplary' importance of Italy nor was it particularly worried about the political dangers which might originate from a Soviet presence on the peninsula.[64] On the contrary, what it did fear extremely were the consequences of an Anglo-American attitude of *chasse gardée*, and the only coherent plan it drew up for the administration of the European armistices did not exclude the Russians from the control of the territories occupied by the Western allies but rather involved them. But the immediate concerns of A.F.H.Q. in Algiers and of the military authorities in Washington prevailed over the longer term considerations of the F.O. and gradually came to deform its plan. To conclude, if Soviet participation was not achieved in Italy this was not due to the British policy but rather to the impossibility of applying this policy. This in its turn was the result of the preponderant weight of 'military logic', in the post-armistice period, in a territory where the armistice had marked the opening, not the end, of hostilities.

[61] Eden to Macmillan no. 421, 23 Mar. 1944, R 4547/51/22 (43830).

[62] Ibid. and NAF 653, 22 Mar. 1944, R 4665/51/22 (43830).

[63] It should be emphasized that the preamble to this document placed the U.S.S.R. on the same footing as Great Britain and the United States.

[64] As has been argued by M. Herz: 'The U.S. and Britain did not wish the Russians to have a role in the occupation of Italy because they were worried that the Russians would support the activities of the Italian communists...' *Beginnings of the cold war* (Bloomington, 1966), p. 182.